

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 172**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Chan**

(Principal coauthor: Senator Escutia)

**(Coauthors: Assembly Members Berg, Bermudez, Coto, Evans, Hancock, Jones, Leno, Lieber, Liu, Montanez, Nava, Parra, Pavley, Ruskin, Salinas, and Yee)**

(Coauthors: Senators Figueroa, Florez, Kuehl, Lowenthal, and Ortiz)

January 20, 2005

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An act relating to preschool.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 172, as introduced, Chan. Universal preschool.

Existing law, the Child Care and Developmental Services Act, establishes various full- and part-time programs for a comprehensive, coordinated, and cost-effective system of developmental services for children to age 14 and their parents. Other existing law, the Kindergarten Readiness Pilot Program, permits, until January 1, 2011, school districts to participate in the program to provide kindergarten preparedness opportunities to increase a child's readiness for school. Existing law requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to administer state preschool programs including part-time day and preschool appropriate programs for prekindergarten children 3 to 5 years of age.

This bill would make certain findings and state the intent of the Legislature with regard to universal preschool.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.  
State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1     SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the  
2 following:

3     (a) A compelling body of respected research demonstrates that  
4 quality preschool programs benefit children and their families,  
5 the public school system, public safety, the economy, and society  
6 as a whole.

7     (b) California has an enormous opportunity to reach children  
8 at a time when they are eager and ready to learn. 90 percent of  
9 brain development takes place before age five, making early  
10 childhood the best time to invest in preschool programs that  
11 boost learning, creativity, and social skills. Preschool programs  
12 lay a strong foundation that helps children succeed in school and  
13 in life.

14     (c) Quality preschool experiences boost academic achievement  
15 in school, decrease grade retention, decrease special education  
16 placements, and increase graduation rates. Quality preschool  
17 further reduces the likelihood of later arrest and incarceration,  
18 and increases college attendance and earnings in adulthood.  
19 Economists report that every dollar invested in quality preschool  
20 returns as much as seven dollars (\$7) to the public.

21     (d) Hundreds of thousands of children in this state do not have  
22 access to quality preschool. Preschool age children enroll at a  
23 rate of just 47 percent below the national average and far below  
24 international comparisons.

25     (e) The fastest growing segment of the preschool age  
26 population is the most underenrolled, in that Latino children  
27 account for nearly half of all preschool age children, yet have the  
28 lowest enrollment rate of any ethnic group, just 37 percent.

29     (f) Of the estimated 1.1 million children who are three to five  
30 years old and not yet enrolled in kindergarten, about 39 percent  
31 would likely be designated as English language learners.  
32 Therefore, pathways to excellence must be created for all  
33 children while communicating respect and support for  
34 differences in cultural origins.

35     (g) Quality preschool experiences decrease special education  
36 placements, in part because they have the potential to provide  
37 early identification and intervention for young children with  
38 exceptional needs, which can reduce the need for ongoing special

1 education services. Providing access to quality preschool for  
2 children with exceptional needs can help support their  
3 development and prepare them for a successful transition to  
4 kindergarten and beyond.

5 (h) Research confirms the many benefits that children, parents,  
6 and preschool programs gain when parents are involved in their  
7 child's preschool learning both inside the classroom and at home.

8 (i) Universal programs - those available to all families - are  
9 supported by research. Research shows that children from all  
10 backgrounds benefit from quality preschool. The school and life  
11 success of low-income and at-risk children may be significantly  
12 increased through quality preschool. But problems with school  
13 readiness are not confined to low-income children and neither are  
14 the benefits of preschool. A 2004 University of California study  
15 of California kindergartners found that children from all income  
16 backgrounds who attended preschool showed significant  
17 prereading and premath gains over children who did not attend  
18 preschool.

19 (j) Low- and middle-income California families have low  
20 preschool enrollment rates. Private preschool may be  
21 prohibitively expensive, with quality programs in some  
22 communities costing twice as much per year as tuition to the  
23 California State University system.

24 (k) The Council of Chief State School Officers has found that  
25 efforts to reform and strengthen public education cannot succeed  
26 without a concerted effort to support and improve programs that  
27 provide care and education for our youngest children.

28 (l) All California families should have access to quality  
29 preschool programs for their children.

30 (m) These ideas are supported by many of the findings and  
31 recommendations of the National Education Goals Panel, the  
32 2000 California Master Plan for Education, and the 1998  
33 Universal Preschool Task Force.

34 SEC. 2. Therefore, it is the intent of the Legislature to  
35 establish and provide a voluntary preschool-for-all system that  
36 conforms to the following principles:

37 (a) Programs may be offered in a variety of settings including  
38 public schools, centers, family child care homes, faith-based  
39 institutions, and head start programs. These programs will meet  
40 research-based standards for social, emotional, cognitive,

1 linguistic, and physical development, and are linked to public  
2 school system standards.

3 (b) A goal will be set for preschool teachers to be educated  
4 and compensated at levels comparable to teachers in the public  
5 school system and early education professionals will have access  
6 to ongoing professional development.

7 (c) Recognizing that parents are their children's first teachers,  
8 and that preschool programs benefit from engaged parents,  
9 programs will create opportunities for parent involvement in  
10 preschool settings, as well as for interaction between parents and  
11 preschool teachers and administrators. Quality preschools can  
12 become learning resources not only for children but for their  
13 parents as well.

14 (d) Families will have access to programs with settings,  
15 locations, hours, and participatory opportunities that meet their  
16 needs and preferences, and that support their aspirations for their  
17 children. For working families, part-time preschool will be  
18 integrated with full-time daycare as seamlessly as possible.

19 (e) Children of all cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds,  
20 income levels, and neighborhoods will be welcomed in inclusive  
21 programs designed to meet their needs.

22 (f) Elements that promote the inclusion of children with  
23 exceptional needs will be integrated into the planning and design  
24 of programs, facilities, staff training programs, and the provision  
25 of resources for parents.

26 (g) A system of public accountability will be established at  
27 state and local levels to ensure maximum benefits for children,  
28 equal access to services, proper use of tax dollars, and  
29 transparency to the public.

30 (h) Programs will meet established standards of the public  
31 school system, providing adequate pay and benefits for qualified  
32 teachers, establishing accessible higher education opportunities  
33 for the preparation of the workforce, developing suitable  
34 preschool facilities, and engaging in ongoing quality  
35 assessments. Financing of preschool should not detract from  
36 funding for infants, toddlers, and schoolage children, nor child  
37 care subsidies that enable low-income families to work.

38 (i) A preschool-for-all system will connect coherently with the  
39 public education system as well as to programs serving infants  
40 and toddlers and those providing full-time, full-time year-round

1 child care and other services for children of all ages. In addition,  
2 the preschool-for-all system will connect families to other  
3 services, including health and nutrition resources, that support  
4 children's readiness to learn.

5 (j) All children deserve the opportunity to get ready to do their  
6 best in school, and to succeed later in life. Quality preschool  
7 helps build a learning foundation that should be available to all  
8 families who want it for their children. The Legislature  
9 recognizes the benefits of quality preschool, and that the public  
10 education system, the economy, and quality of life will be  
11 strengthened by providing quality preschool for all children.

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